

## What's the impact of a water education activity? Ask a Teen!

*By Don Snethen, Section Chief  
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The Watershed Management Section – Bureau of Water is responsible for addressing water pollution problems caused by nonpoint point pollutant sources, that is pollutants carried by stormwater runoff from farmland, small feed lots, small cities, drift from pesticide applications, etc. Because there are no rules and regulations that require control of many nonpoint pollutant sources, the Watershed Management Section spends a great deal of time explaining what nonpoint sources are, how water is polluted by nonpoint sources, and that each one of us has a responsibility to do our part to prevent water pollution.

The Watershed Management Section has made a number of grants to support water festivals that are intended to educate students and adults. While education is a key to water resource protection, we are still obligated to ask how we are doing. The following article is the result of asking a teenager about what teen-agers think of on the subject of water.

The article is written by Kimberly Duncan. She is the daughter of Lisa Duncan-Edes and the late Mark Duncan, a KDHE employee. She is 14 years old and will be in the 9th Grade at Shawnee Heights High School. Lisa works in the Bureau of Water -Watershed Management Section. Kimberly has accompanied Lisa to work a few times this summer.

As with most bright intelligent teenagers she will freely offer an opinion on about anything. I took the opportunity to pose the question – “on the subject of water what do you think teen-ages think”?

### **WAKE UP AND SMELL THE WATER**

Many say that our nation's children are the present today & the future tomorrow. If that is correct, then why don't they know anything about our environment and it's contemporary state?

Being a teen in the current society, I know that there isn't much talking amongst kids about what to do to keep our lakes & rivers clean. It is not a common conversation starter and so if you just start babbling on about the condition of the nearest body of water, the other kids would look at you like you were crazy. Even many adults don't talk about the water contamination problems, maybe because they don't know, but it isn't just their fault, since teens couldn't care less about what has been in their water. So, what we end up with are narrow-minded teens that grow up to be narrow-minded adults and raise narrow-minded youth.

Then, they are expected to clean the water up when they don't even realize why it was polluted in the first place! Well, Kansas has been trying to put an end to that.

During the past eight years, on a mission to help, Kansas's cities have spent approximately \$550 million on water pollution control, but if no one understands why excellent water is essential to every being & happening, then what good does it do to fuss and spend a whole bunch of money? That is why it is important to conserve the water we have, and alert others to do the same.

Most funds like these were spent attempting to get more of the public educated about the fact that our state has water quality problems that need to be recognized & treated, and if you spread the word to be aware, you could really make a difference in your life and the life of those around you.

So... be ready, take a stand, and go take charge. Start reducing, reusing, & recycling! Go plant a tree, encourage a recycling club, or do something as simple as picking up litter, because that litter may just end up in your water.

-Kimberly Duncan